

Happy Birthday Benton County! Benton County was founded in 1840 and named after Thomas Hart Benton. He was a lawyer and a member of the U.S. Senate from Missouri. Benton was a big proponent of westward expansion of the United States, a cause that became known as Manifest Destiny. Thomas Benton was the first member of the Senate to serve five terms, from 1821 to 1851.

Prior to 1840, there is some debate over who was the first settler to live here. In 1840, families began to slowly move in, most keeping close to the timber portion. Most considered the vast prairie barren, bleak and a dreary waste and was considered "The Lost Land"! Once families began farming it, the closest market was the village of Chicago. Once a year farmers would load up their grain and provisions for two weeks and take it to market, the whole trip taking about 15 days total. Sometime in the 40's, families began moving into different portions of the county, and a market opened in La Fayette, allowing farmers to make the trip to market in two days. Much like today, Benton County was primarily agricultural. Tenant Operated farms were 44% in 1880, 61% in 1980 and almost 93% today.

The town of Ambia was founded in February of 1875 by Ezekiel and Marietta Talbot, and the town was named for their daughter, Ambia Talbot. Two years earlier, Ezekiel and Marietta platted the town of Talbot.

The town of Boswell was first laid out by a man named Charles Moore, but he sold the land to Elizabeth Scott, who with her husband Charles re-platted the town. It was named for Parnaham Boswell.

The town of Earl Park was founded in July of 1872 by Adams D. Raub, and named for his uncle, Adams Earl. Earl Park is home to the first wind farm in Benton County, built in 2008.

The town of Fowler was founded by Moses Fowler and his wife in October 1872, and in 1875 it was re-platted to expand the town. In 1874 it became the county seat.

The town of Otterbein was originally known as Pond Grove. It was renamed after William Otterbein Brown who donated land for the town. It was platted by John Levering and his wife in 1872 with an addition by Mary A. Clancy in 1883.

The town of Oxford was Benton County's first town. The commissioners selected a site in 1843 to be the county seat, until 1874 when it moved to more centrally located Fowler. It was first called Milroy, after one of the commissioners, but another town in Indiana had that name already, so Hartford was selected. Once discovered another town already had this name as well, Judge David J. McConnell gave the town its present name. Oxford is known as the home of Dan Patch, a world famous harness racing horse.

In 2008 the first Wind Farm in the state of Indiana and Benton County went up in Earl Park. It is approved for 135 turbines with 87 turbines up and covers 11 square miles. Wind power is one of the lowest-cost, renewable electricity alternatives currently available. Three more wind farms have been constructed, totaling 560 turbines so far! One of most frequently asked questions is "Can we see the Wind Turbines". In 2010 the economic development office created a Tourism Center and started offering wind farm tours. Each year the number of people taking a tour has increased, and in 2014 over 1,000 people went on a wind farm tour. For more information on a tour, visit www.bentoncounty.in.gov, www.benton4biz.com or email Kelly Kepner at: kkepner@bentoncounty.in.gov.